

Executive Summary of Results:

Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1991-1999

Lancaster County, Nebraska

*YRBS Results
Lancaster County, NE*

Alcohol

Trends in reported alcohol use by Lancaster County teens were mixed during the 1990s. General indicators for drinking history, current consumption, episodic heavy drinking, drunk driving, or alcohol or drug use prior to sex did not change substantially. However, the percentage of teens reporting that they first drank alcohol at 12 years old or younger declined from 1991 to 1999. These data were consistent with YRBS data for Nebraska. However, in contrast to local data, the U.S. YRBS reported no improvement or increases in current drinking and episodic heavy drinking.

In 1999, 80% of teens reported that they ever had a drink of alcohol for other than religious purposes. Nearly half (48%) reported having had a drink in the past 30 days, one-third (33%) reported episodic heavy drinking (five or more drinks in one sitting) in the past month, and 26% reported that they had their first alcoholic drink before the age of 13.

Tobacco

Several indicators of tobacco use among Lancaster County teens declined overall from 1991 to 1999. In 1999, teens were less likely than in previous years to report ever smoking, smoking daily, or using smokeless tobacco. These local declines in teen tobacco use in Lancaster County stand in contrast to unchanged or increasing trends in Nebraska and the nation. Additional positive trends included teen smokers reporting smoking fewer cigarettes and beginning smoking at a later age than in previous years. A strong decline was evident in the percentage of teens who obtain their cigarettes by purchasing them, with a parallel increase in the percentage reporting that another person purchased their cigarettes for them. There was little change in reported current cigarette use or quit attempts.

In 1999, 62% of teens reported that they had ever smoked a cigarette, 35% reported that they had smoked during the past 30 days, 11% reporting smoking daily during the past 30 days, and 8% of teens reported use of chewing tobacco or snuff during the past 30 days. Teen smokers were most likely to report smoking their first cigarette at age 13 or 14 (39%) and one-fourth (25%) reported having had their first cigarette at age 11 or 12. Smokers were most likely to report having obtained their cigarettes by having another person purchase the cigarettes for them (35%) or by borrowing them (33%). Eighteen percent of teen smokers and 10% of smokers under age 18 reported that they bought their cigarettes themselves. Nearly one-third (60%) of teen smokers reported having ever tried to quit smoking.

Illegal Drug Use

Reported experience with marijuana among Lancaster County teens increased, then declined, during the 1990s. Reported experience with inhalants and injected drugs declined and experience with other illegal drugs changed little. New 1999 questions provided baseline data on methamphetamine and heroin use. Stable or decreasing Lancaster County trends in most types of drug use contrast with increasing trends in Nebraska and/or the U.S. Reported current use (within the past 30 days) of marijuana and cocaine changed little. There were signs of teens marijuana use at earlier ages.

In 1999, 36% of teens reported ever having used marijuana, 18% reported having used it in the past 30 days, and 46% of those who had smoked marijuana reported having first used it at 13 or 14 years of age. Also in 1999, 6% of teens reported ever using cocaine, 7% reported ever using methamphetamine,

11% reported ever using inhalants, 2% reported ever using steroids without a doctor's prescription, and 1% reported ever injecting an illegal drug.

Violence

Reported rates of violence among Lancaster County teens declined from 1991 to 1999. There was a steady decline in reported involvement in physical fights and weapons possession (including guns) over the five biennial survey years. These trends were consistent with declining rates in Nebraska and the U.S. New questions in 1999 provided baseline data on abuse by one's boyfriend or girlfriend, as well as on forced sexual intercourse.

In 1999, 30% of teens reported having been involved in a physical fight in the past 12 months and 3% reported that they were medically treated for an injury due to a physical fight in the past 12 months. Fifteen percent of teens reported that they carried a weapon within the past 30 days and 5% reported that they carried a gun in the past 30 days. Seven percent of teens reported that their boyfriend or girlfriend had hit, slapped, or physically hurt them on purpose during the past 12 months, while 6% reported that they had ever been forced to have sexual intercourse against their will.

Suicide

Reported levels of suicide ideation (consideration and plans) and attempts among Lancaster County teens declined from 1991 to 1999. There was a steady decline over the five biennial survey years in the percentage of students who report seriously considering suicide, planning a suicide attempt, or attempting suicide. Reported medical treatment for suicide-related injury did not decline significantly. Declining rates of suicide ideation in Lancaster County were consistent with U.S. and Nebraska declines, but declining suicide attempts were not as apparent at the state or national level. A new 1999 question provided baseline data on depression.

In 1999, teens reported the following thoughts and behaviors in the past 12 months: 22% reported a period of depression, 18% reported that they seriously considered suicide, 15% reported that they planned a suicide attempt, 8% reported that they attempted suicide, and 2% reported that they had to receive medical treatment for an injury resulting from a suicide attempt.

Helmet and Seatbelt Use

There was little improvement from 1991 to 1999 in reported usage of bicycle or motorcycle helmets by Lancaster County teens. Reported seatbelt use improved from 1991 to 1993 but thereafter changed little. These trends were consistent with trends in the same indicators for Nebraska and the nation.

In 1999, 36% of teens reported that they always wear a seatbelt while riding in a car driven by someone else.

Among the 22% of teens who reported riding a motorcycle in the past 12 months, 36% reported that they never or rarely wear a helmet while riding. Among the 78% who reported riding a bicycle in the past 12 months, 91% reported that they never or rarely wear a helmet.

Sexual Activity

Reported levels of sexual activity among Lancaster County teens declined from 1991 to 1999. There was a steady decline in general indicators of sexual activity, including ever having had intercourse, more than one sexual partner, and sex in the past 3 months. Alcohol and drug use continue to be a major influence on youth sexual activity and reported contraceptive use showed little improvement from 1991 to 1999. Failure to use effective birth control or protection from sexually transmitted diseases continues to be prevalent among sexually active students. These trends in indicators of sexual behavior parallel the same indicators for Nebraska and the nation as a whole.

In 1999, 36% of teens reported ever having had sexual intercourse, 23% reported having had sex within the past 3 months, 19% reported having had more than one sexual partner, and 13% reported having first had sex at age 12 or younger. Among those who reported having had sex, 29% reported alcohol or drug use prior to their last sexual encounter and 62% reported having used a condom in their last sexual encounter.

Physical Activity

Reported physical activity among Lancaster County teens increased over the 1990s in the areas of strength training, team sports and moderate physical activity. However, reports of vigorous physical activity and participation in school physical education classes did not change noticeably during the 1990s. These trends contrast with state and national trends, mainly in increasing local reports of moderate exercise and strengthening exercise, compared with level trends in Nebraska and the nation. Local trends in other physical activity indicators were similar to state and nation. New questions in 1999 provided baseline data on hours of television viewing and injuries due to physical activity.

In 1999, 68% of teens reported vigorous physical activity, 28% reported moderate physical activity and 58% reported strengthening exercise in the past 7 days. Participation in sports teams was reported by 64% and enrollment in a school physical education class was reported by 41%. Forty-one percent of teens reported being treated by a doctor or nurse due to an injury received while being physically active, and 29% of teens reported watching three or more hours of television per school day.

Body Weight

During the 1990s, indicators of exercise and dieting for weight loss or weight control by Lancaster County teens increased, while the percentage of teens perceiving themselves as overweight changed little. Reported prevalence of using diet supplements without a doctor's prescription, vomiting or laxative use remained unchanged over the period. A new question in 1999 provided baseline data on fasting. YRBS data for Nebraska and the U.S. indicated little change in reported overweight or weight loss intent.

In 1999, 33% of teens reported that they viewed themselves as overweight, and 46% reported that they were currently trying to lose weight. Nearly one-third (60%) reported that they exercised in the past 30 days in order to lose or maintain their weight and 42% reported that they dieted in the past 30 days for the same reason. The following weight loss behaviors were also reported: fasting for a 24 hour period (10%), diet supplements without a doctor's advice (6%), and vomiting or laxative use (4%).

